Eisenhower Tape Released

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Washington — President Dwight Eisenhower was caught on an Oval Office tape recorder complaining about a Republican attempt to limit his foreign policy options and referring to a predecessor as "almost an egomaniac."

The first secret Eisenhower recording made public — a conversation between the president and Sen. Walter F. George (D-Ga.) on Jan. 7, 1955 — was released yesterday by the Eisenhower Library through the national Archives.

In an apparent reference to Franklin D. Roosevelt, Eisenhower says "one president I could name made very great errors." He described him as "almost an egomaniac in his beliefs in his own wisdom."

Like many Republicans, Eisenhower was critical of the Yalta Accords, negotiated by Roosevelt in the closing months of World War II.

By far the largest number of White House tapes come from the administration of Richard Nixon, recordings that eventually led to his downfall in the Watergate scandal. But there also are tapes from the administrations of Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, Johnson and Reagan.

The Eisenhower tape was made from a dictabelt. In 1991 Ann Whitman, Eisenhower's secretary, acknowledged that some conversations were recorded. There are about 10 in all, said Susan Cooper of the Archives.

George, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Eisenhower discussed how to moderate if not block a proposed constitutional amendment by Sen. John W. Bricker (R-Ohio) that would have required judicial review of all treaties and executive agreements to assure that they did not violate the Constitution. The proposal was never added to the Constitution.

Conservative Republican concern over the Yalta accords, which gave the Soviet Union a free hand in Eastern Europe and the United Nations Charter, led to the move to amend the Constitution.

During their 25-minute conversation, Eisenhower tells George that supporters of the amendment argue that if it were adopted, "we'll have no more Yaltas."

"When you come right down to it," says Eisenhower, "there is nothing in the Constitution that could have prevented Yalta."

George agrees, saying, "It comes right back down to good common sense."

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